The Universe Runs Through It: Cheering Gargantians, Snotty Peridots, Calm Etherians, and a Perplexed Kipo

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by lefemmerouge

Summary

Captain Lars concludes his conversation with the medical doctor/librarian named Doctor Oldham and hopes to leave Gargantia. However, he chooses to stay in order to help mediate a dispute between a mechanic and a pirate queen. Trials and tribulations remain for him and his crew and those across the stars whether on the now-peaceful planet of Etheria, the desolate Las Vistas wasteland, or the curvature of space-time itself. Friendships and relationships will be tested, people will be killed or hurt. Some will open themselves up to new possibilities, while others will close themselves off. Tensions are high. The problems of those across the stars are interlinked because the universe moves through them like a rushing river, raging their minds and hearts until it reaches its conclusion.

Notes

Pappy is used as a nickname for Padparascha, OCAC is the acronym for the Off Colors Astral Cruiser, and RT stands for Rutile Twins. This story, for Kipo and Age of the Wonderbeasts, is set after the last episode of season 1, "Beyond the Valley of the Dogs," with Glimmer warping in right after that, continuing from where her story left off in "Lars & The Off Colors' Fantastical Etherian Escapade". Also, Apta is used in this story rather than Entrapta and Fuma rather than Perfuma. Their story builds off the events in the aforementioned fictional narrative as well. The title of "The Universe Runs Through It" is inspired by the film, "A River Runs Through It," although this story is nothing like that movie. For reference, Kipo and Glimmer are voiced by the same person, Karen Fukuhara, so I thought it would be fun if the two characters came together.

Comments are welcome and appreciated.

Update #1 on 2/8/25: In preparation for adding this fic on Squidge World, I decided to divide this fic into various chapters.

Update #2 on 2/28/25: All four chapters of this fic were reposted on Squidge World, with changes to dialogue, structure, and other aspects, with the original, and flawed, text, being overwritten. If you want to read the original text, you can still do so on Wattpad.

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1: Lukkage, Ridget, Departure from Gargantia, and Hostile Peridots

Lukkage awoke with a start. Attempting to move her hands, she realized they were shackled to a cold metal chair. She growled. *What have I done wrong? Why would they do this to me? They are going to pay big time!* she thought to herself. Of course, her naivete and arrogance ignored the fact that she had tried to destroy the whole of Gargantia because Pinion broke up with her, an act of pettiness taken to the utmost extreme.

Sensing chains wrapped round her arms, she struggled to remove them. This attempt failed. She screeched into the dark, hoping she could lure in someone to help her. No one came to her aid. Instead, an electric light suddenly flickered on, illuminating her face, pale skin, magenta-colored hair while another revealed a person standing a few feet away. A voice thundered across the room.

"Ms. Lukkage, you are on trial for crimes against Gargantia and its residents. We cannot stand idly by as you continue to enact destruction."

She snickered. This was *unacceptable*. She'd never accept being treated like this. "Crimes! Ha! There are *no laws* on the seas!"

The woman put her in her place. She wanted to make sure that what Lukkage had done was wrong and that she needed to face the music. "That's where you are wrong. You have *repeatedly* entered the jurisdiction of Gargantia. As the Fleet Commander, I can comfortably assert this is true and correct. We have eyewitness testimony and records coming out the wazoo."

Lukkage growled. She would not accept this trial against her, under any circumstances. "This proceeding is a sham. Isn’t anyone gonna defend me?"

The woman shook her head. She couldn't stand this pirate queen. "We'd rather hear from you directly. Tell us *why* you attacked the Gargantia Fleet and put hundreds upon hundreds of human lives at risk."

Staring at Ridget's light violet eyes, she saw a fierceness that reminded her of herself. This was a showdown, one she would not win, due to the unquestionable hostility on the ship toward pirates such as her. She recognized the inevitability of her punishment. From her perspective, the Gargantians had taken a bolder move than she expected, capturing her and scuttling the pirate fleet. Without anyone else behind her, she could do little to "counter" Gargantia or enact 'revenge' on Pinion and that space captain, whose name she couldn't remember. "…that darned Pinion…*he* broke off our relationship…I wanted to get back at him and everything that stood by him…destroying Gargantia would give me the prestige, making me the sole leader of the planet, where I could do what I pleased."

Ridget scoffed. She couldn't believe that she did *all* this because of some boy? It seemed absurd to her. "Could you have survived, anyway? If Gargantia had disappeared, the fuel and

supplies onboard your ships would have run out. What a foolhardy act over a broken heart… without any further explanation of your actions, we have *no alternative*. We will pronounce our sentence."

She sneered. This whole trial seemed crooked to her. Didn't they know who *SHE* was? "Wait! I haven't had the appropriate amount of time to explain myself…this is a sham trial! Admit it, you damn scoundrels!"

Ridget chuckled. She got more and more ridiculous by the minute, at least from her perspective. "The books we have on trials are limited, so we are going off what is available, what Dr. Oldham, the Sage, acquired for us…do *you* have a problem with knowledge, with learning?"

Lukkage was confused. *How the heck are you supposed to answer a question like that?* "I-I don't know how to respond to that."

Ridget shook her head. She had enough of this sassy, annoying pirate queen. "Throw her in the brig."

She pleaded with Ridget to change her mind. She just wanted to see him once more. "NO! Please let me see Pinion again…*one last time*."

She shook her head. There was *no way* she would let this happen. "Ha. That ain't gonna happen, lady. He will not be coming to see you."

As the guards dragged her away and into the brig, she shouted back at the top of her lungs. "This is an outrage! This will not stand! When the people of Gargantia find out, the power all you elites hold *will crumble* like a bunch of breadcrumbs!"

Ridget grumbled and chuckled at Lukkage's bad metaphors. The trial had not gone the way she expected. Lukkage acted quite belligerent and her explanation didn't make sense. She asked herself, *Lukkage conducted this attack all because Pinion dumped her?* It appeared extreme, especially to someone who had never been in a relationship with anyone else before. Marching to the command headquarters, she met Crown and Flange. Dr. Oldham had contacted her, saying he would be en route shortly, after he finished talking with the space captain. "Crown, Flange? What should I do about Lukkage? I'm afraid that if I release her, she'll cobble her pirate fleet back together…and menace us again."

Flange sighed. He told her what he thought, as he always did. "That is *a valid* line of thinking. However, we can't let her rot in a cell. The more criminal elements on the ship, including those that captured the comrades of the space captain, bringing them to that awful saloon, will be emboldened and try to release her. We *can't risk* a wide social conflict. I say we ask Dr. Oldham for his counsel on this important matter."

Ridget pondered this suggestion. Crown just nodded his head, not saying a word. Turning to both of them, she remarked, "You have a point. Keeping her locked up forever isn't an answer either. We need something that will solve the crisis *without* riling up the Gargantian people."

Throwing back her dark purple hair, Ridget twiddled her thumbs, debating about their next move. Meanwhile, Dr. Oldham and Lars chuckled in his sanctuary, reminiscing about his past life and Lars' life on the Earth thousands, if not millions, of light-years away. "Mister, thanks so much for talking with me today. I really appreciate it. I hope what I've told you serves as a great addition to your library."

Oldham smiled. He loved to be of service to other people. "It is. What you said *will help* those in Gargantia, whether now or in the future, learn about other planets, to expand their horizons, moving humanity forward. I must go…I'm obligated to help with the trial of that wayward Pirate Queen, as the sage on this fleet."

Lars was nervous. He didn't want to see her again. "Oh, the one I knocked over with my booming voice…yeah, *that lady*."

Oldham tried to push him into action. He saw an opportunity for Gargantia. "They didn't ask for you. By jove, you could come along anyway. I'd get your two friends back to the ship so they don't get jammed up in this whole mess."

That seemed like a fair plan to him. While he did not want to face Lukkage, he believed he could do something to help. "Alright, Mister, that plan is *swell*!" As he said that, Oldham walked away, toward his library, and waved. Lars went the opposite direction and walked toward his spaceship.

Sometime later, Pappy and Rhodonite returned to the ship. Lars told them to stay there and *not* follow him. They did so reluctantly. He gazed at their worried faces, assuring them he'd come back safe and sound, then they could all move onto the next adventure, *together*. Rhodonite, calmer than usual, smiled and addressed Lars directly. "Thanks Captain. We'll be waiting for you. Best of luck!"

Dr. Oldham arrived, while Ridget, Flange, and Crown couldn't come to a consensus on how to treat Lukkage. His sauntering across Gargantia had ended. He joined Lars, with both crossing the expanse of the fleet to the command headquarters. They had been expecting the good doctor, knowing that his attendance would calm them, improving their ability to make a decision. The presence of Lars astonished them. No one could understand *why* he had agreed to help them. "Captain Lars, why have you come here? This is a matter that doesn't concern you. Your spaceship, which landed here yesterday, *can leave*, along with the four mates onboard."

He tried to explain himself in the simplest terms. He did not want any conflict with them. "Miss, I am obligated to help in whatever way I can. I am not a Gargantian, but I am human. Ensuring that humanity survives is part of my life mission."

Ridget was intrigued. "Ok, Captain Lars. *What ideas* do you have for the Pirate Queen?" she asked.

He cleared his throat and told her. "Why not mediate a discussion between her and Pinion? If it goes well, they can work out their differences without fighting each other."

Ridget thought it over. Perhaps this human did have a good idea after all. Maybe he could be useful. "Tha.s not a bad idea. We can arrange that."

Sitting in the brig, Lukkage opened her eyes once again. What she saw before her surprised her. Pinion began to enter the room. Perhaps the Gargantians were getting soft and wouldn't be as harsh. Or maybe the darkness of the room distorted her sense of reality. She couldn't be completely sure if a hallucination had taken over or not. She cried out. "Pinion, is that you?"

He answered her back almost immediately. He *didn't* want to deceive her. "Yeah, it is. They told me to come here so we could work out our differences. Bridget, Crown, and Flange will be mediators, as will the space captain."

This made Lukkage happy. She hoped to not be killed. "In any case, I'm glad to be alive rather than dead. It's a relief."

Lars grinned. He saw the approach he has posed as already bearing fruit. If he had tried this on Etheria, maybe the civil war could have ended. Unfortunately, his mind wasn't in the place to come up with such an idea. He had just endured a space battle and had Steven, in some new pink form, yell at him. Steven had threatened to smash him into little pieces, similar to what he did to Pearl, hurting her as plunged her into the ground.

Pinion cleared his throat. He would beat Lukkage to the punch, so he could have the upper hand in this conversation, hoping it would go his way. "I am sorry for hurting you, Lukkage, I didn't think it meant that much…I guess I was being selfish, thinking about myself and no one else."

Moaning, Lukkage took a deep breath and replied back, softly, "I'm glad to hear that, Pinion. Let's be together again. I've changed!"

Pinion couldn't stand this sort of deception and trickery. He wouldn’t fall for it. He recognized Lukkage's personality, especially her over-confidence. He bellowed back in a display of words which astounded Lars, Ridget, and the others in attendance. "I'm *not* going to be your boyfriend again! I told you that already. What we had *wasn't healthy*. We need to go our separate ways and accept each other's choices."

Grumbling, Lukkage realized the best she could do would be to accept this. She told him, "Fine, fine. There's no convincing you. I'll just cry a river into the vast ocean circling this world, entering a dark road of despair."

Pinion knew he had to make sure that she didn't go down that path. That would mean everything they had gone through would be wasted. "There's *no reason* to think that way, Lukkage. You'll find someone out there, I'll bet on that."

Lukkage was willing to accept this olive branch. It was better than any punishment they would have imposed on her. "Thanks for believing in me, Pinion. Friends?"

He realized that if this would work, then everything could go back to normal. Well, at least *a form of normal*, you could say. "Sure, but nothing more."

She groused. She knew that agreeing to such a friendship would prevent further conflict. Then she could settle down into a life outside of piracy, perhaps? "I…can live with that," she remarked. What she would do with her life from now on was still in question, but she thought it would be okay for *the time being*.

As Lars saw it, Gargantia had dodged a bullet. The method of mediation he had showed these humans could help them unite their society, heal its wounds, and bring peace, at least he thought, in his naivete about the success of this technique. In reality, the process would be much harder, not something that could be solved in one night or one single meeting. Having never experienced that or been a part of that process, this perspective escaped him. The Gargantian leaders, such as Ridget, were thankful Lars had helped them. "Captain, I am grateful you suggested this. What you did today is a great weight off our shoulders. Is there anything we can do?"

He shook his head. He didn't need anything from them. "No, ma'am, I don't believe so. I already installed a warp pad in that library run by Doctor Oldham, so when we get back to our Earth, we can return here whenever!"

She had *no idea* what in the world he was talking about. What sort of device had he installed, and...*why*? "A warp…what?" she asked, confusedly.

Lars tried to explain it the best he could. He had *barely* used them himself, but he knew at least a little about them. "It's a transporter device that allows for me and my friends to travel across distances. Humans can't use it. Only those with gems, such as my shipmates and buddies back home, can independently activate it. Anything atop the pad, when it is activated, can warp through space despite extreme difficulty. Essentially, humans cannot initiate warps without a warp whistle, while they can ride through warp streams. When we have returned to our planet, we will provide you with one. Also, make sure you don’t drop heavy objects on it as that will render it unusable."

This went totally over Ridget's head. What the heck was he talking about? She had no idea. She smiled, and said, "yeah...sure, Captain, thanks for that information. I hope you come back soon! You will always be welcome in Gargantia!"

Lars grinned back. He bowed, then remarked, "Thanks for your hospitality, Fleet Commander! And for you, Doctor Oldham!"

This made Oldham happy. He was glad to help these weary travelers. "My pleasure, my fine pink friend." He left the room and waved to them all.

On the way to his ship, a similar face stopped him. She peered into his eyes so deeply he sensed she, at that moment, examined his soul. Shaking his head, he twisted about, stopping to explain why he couldn't stay, even as he predicted it wouldn't satisfy her. "Melty, I'm aware you fancy me and all…but, I'm sorry, you *can't* come with me. It's not possible. I already have four people on my ship, so any more would unbalance it."

This made Melty sad. Even though she was clearly too young for him and the relationship never would have worked out anyway. Sometimes attractions don't follow a set age limit, even though such attractions can be problematic (or even toxic) for those involved, especially

if there is a wide age gap between two people. She told him, "I-I understand, Captain. I wish we could be together…I'll miss you, *cutie*."

Lars felt uncomfortable around her. He thought she was too eager and showing too much of her skin. He liked people who dressed more modestly. Perhaps that made him a bit of a prude, but he didn't care. He just wanted to forget about her. "Uh…Here's a photograph. Its *no substitute* for the real me. I hope it helps calm your mind."

As tears streamed across her face and onto her cheeks, she handed him a detailed illustration of herself to Lars, drawn by Amy, who had a robust artistic talent. She began singing a melancholy song of loss and commemoration:

One day, someplace/

We'll meet again/

While you blast off to space/

As he continued running, he could hear the vocals continuing, getting more emphatic. He could hear voices joining her. He guessed that her friends Amy and Saaya were also singing. The words filled his heart as he neared the *OCAC*, with its engines roaring. Even so, he felt that Melty was too young for him.

One day, someplace/

We'll meet again/

And have a tender embrace/

Only steps away from the ship, he waved back at the gleeful Gargantians. Bellows yelled "you are the best, Lars! See you soon!" to which he smiled.

Entering the ship, the last stanza of the song echoed in the breeze:

Someday, someway/

I'm gonna feel treasured/

Even as you drift away/

Ledo, having recovered from his concussion, came out to hug Amy, who pecked him on the cheek. They stood among the Gargantians who watched in awe, joined by those such as Grace, Amy's animal companion, and mechanics such as Mayta, as the *OCAC* lifted off one last time. People squealed. They shouted "happy travels, Captain!," "thanks again!," and "we wish you the best!"

In keeping with her devotion, Melty roared at the top of her lungs, "I love you, Lars!"

Before the ship jettisoned out of view, Bebel peered out his window, observing the ship lit up by the early morning light. Somberly, he remarked, "Goodbye, friend. Safe travels."

The engines thundering with power, the craft made its way out of the planet's atmosphere. Lars turned to the Rutile Twins and snickered. Sitting in his captain's chair, he realized the ship was his second home. His residence in Beach City was his first. "RT, punch it!" After saluting him, she said, "Aye, aye Captain! Warping in 3...2…1!"

The ship soared through the stars, going at unimaginable rates. Lars felt relaxed until he searched his pockets frantically. As he did that, Pappy piped up, comparable to a prairie dog coming out of the desert sand for the first time. "I…predict the light brown-haired girl will declare her adoration for the Captain…oh my!"

Lars rolled his eyes. Sometime Pappy was too much. "Pappy, that isn't a surprise. I knew that *already*. Wait…when I gave her a picture…oh no. I gave her the photocopy of that photograph of those two women who we fought above the Earth's surface in that space battle too. I hope…"

Rhodonite reassured him that it would be fine. She didn't want him to worry. "It will be fine, Captain. I wouldn't fret over it. I doubt *anything* bad will come of this."

Lars sighed. He then said, "Rhodonite, I guess not."

Suddenly, a greenish glow surrounded the ship. Alert sirens began to go off, warning of danger. Lars stared in astonishment. They hadn't encountered anything like it before. He asked his comrades if they could assist. "RT, Rhodonite…what is happening?"

RT tried to explain to the captain what she believed the ship was experiencing. She couldn't be sure. "Captain, someone is trying to pull us out of our warp as we travel across the universe, before we reach our destination. I…"

Rhodonite, terrified, began to yelp. "ARE WE GONNA DIE! HELP!"

Lars tried to make sure the crew didn't go into a panic. That would be the last thing he wanted. "Rhodonite, calm down. Fluorite, what about the engines? Can we get past this and escape?"

Answering slowly, she told Lars, "The…engines…are…at…full…power…we…are…stuck."

Griping, Lars realized that only one choice remained. Escaping this dilemma required fighting the enemy head on, as outrunning them would be impossible. Standing upright, he issued a command to Fluorite and his other crew members. "Fluorite, cut the engines. Rhodonite, charge the cannons. RT, keep the ship steady."

Nodding, RT remarked, "Aye, aye!" Rhodonite was not as sure. She hesitated. "B-but… captain…shouldn't we trying to beat this rather than going headlong into it?"

Lars sighed. He knew that Rhodonite had a point. He wasn't totally sure about this strategy either. "I thought that too, Rhodo…nite. Whoever did this needs to be dealt with severely."

Accepting what her captain said, but *still* apprehensive, she remarked, "As you wish, Captain."

Sputtering, the spacecraft dropped out of hyperspace. Due to the violent nature, another spacetime disruption occurred, again in a two-month interval, making it equivalent to October 18, 2019, using Earth time measurements. A squadron of four tetrahedron-shaped spacefighters stood steady, flying in the formation of a Diamond. The pale chartreuse yellow sheen of each craft sparkled in the starlight. The video screen of the *OCAC* beeped and Rhodonite, terrified, pressed a button. The screen lit up, showing four different faces on the screen, each with their own square. The Gems cackled as Lars observed them worryingly. "We are the *Peridot Squadron*…the honor of the once gallant Emerald, in all her glory. For your crime *that day*, Captain, you will meet your doom!"

The Off Colors shivered in fear. Aware of the inevitability of conflict, Lars prepared himself to berate the sniveling Peridots for their reckless behavior. Anyone who threatened those on his ship in any way were his enemies. "You bastards! Pulling us out of hyperspace in that way that *could have killed us*. Don't you know better than to hurt people? Come on!"

The Peridots snickered. They loved to mess with people. "If it had destroyed your ship, none of us would have cared. We are loyal to Emerald until the sun sets on the Great Diamond Authority. *Nothing* will stop us now!"

These Peridots saw themselves as remarkable, as Gems of the sun, having no incursions, and few or little cracks. They prided themselves on what they perceived as strong magical powers and their brilliant green skin. Contrasting the gem with the same name, they would not aid in physical detox, help with healing, treating afflictions, or counter effects of negative emotions. Rather than lessening suffering, they aimed to bring about the "necessary change," which meant cleansing the interlopers, improving their own self-esteem and well-being. Additionally, their actions brought coldness and conflict, as they discharged their emotional issues on others. Arrogant and rationalizing their aggression, the Peridots felt that destroying Lars would bring them clarity and heal them, connecting them together. In one way or another, through these actions, the Peridots had poisoned themselves. Their minds were infected with villainy.

The video screen zapped off, revealing an empty space ahead. Lars and his comrades gazed at the enemy. He ordered Rhodonite to shoot their cannons at two of the "Peri-Blasters," as he nicknamed the enemy craft. He then directed RT to fire the *OCAC*'s missiles at the remaining ships. Rhodonite and RT complied, giving a message, to those wayward Peridots, that the *OCAC* was the *real* boss of outer space.

A huge explosion destroyed one of the enemy crafts. The other two were damaged by laser bolts from the *OCAC*. Rockets went screaming toward the remaining ship. This bold, and pre-emptive, attack caught the Peridots off guard as their weapons hadn't fully charged. They were at a disadvantage. Even so, they held their ground, coordinating with each other to engage in what they saw as a joint offensive to eliminate the intruders. For now, they were on the run, at least until the space battle had turned in their favor. The remaining Peridots believed that their combined brainpower would result in a glorious victory over the Off Colors.

Chapter 2: Kipo, Glimmer's Descent from the Sky, Las Vistas, and Dimensional Consequences

Chapter Summary

> Glimmer awakes and finds herself in a place she is not familiar with. She meets Kipo and learns what she caused, by accident, changed the course of Las Vistas forever...

Chapter Notes

> I preparation for reposting this fic on Squidge World, I am dividing this fic into various chapters.

Countless light years away, Glimmer's eyes opened, awoken by the strong wind hitting her face, with the sensation of thousands of tiny needles stabbing her in the cheeks. Clinging onto her staff for her dear life, she hoped it would all be okay, and that she would land safely on the ground. *Why did I have to jump in that damn portal!* she professed in her internal monologue. Beginning to sob as she fell, the temperature began rising, so much it hurt. Continuing her descent, the velocity increased. She kept trying to use her powers. Nothing appeared to work. That is until a lightning bolt struck her. Using her last ounce of strength, she channeled the electrical force into a magic energy bolt which traveled faster than the speed of light. Scarlemagne dismounted his two-headed huge black Mega Flamingo when a light came down from the sky.

As he was blinded, the light entered his body and exploded him into a million pieces, along with the nearby Flamingo. Without this mandrill at the top of the food chain of the decaying badlands, chaos seemed inevitable because this 'leader' had been obsessed with bringing people under control with his psychological methods. His fellow nobles, specifically Lemieux, Easy, Spider, De Brazza, and Marmoset, dispersed in all directions. The court he built had been smashed mistakenly by an outsider who didn't mean to produce such broad social change.

The flash of light, and ensuing detonation, shocked a mauve-skinned 13-year-old Kipo, whose right arm had sustained a mutated form. It was complete with spots, pink fur, and large claws. Her compatriots, Benson, Wolf, Dave, and Mandu were also scared by the nearby explosion. "What the heck was that? It came from Scarlemagne's headquarters..."

Benson didn't know either. He was just as puzzled. "I'm not sure, Kipo. It ain't good. It came from the sky and all…oh my, there's a girl falling through the air! What in the world?"

Kipo looked up and saw the same thing. She declared, "It's our duty to save her and…my Dad before he's tortured by Scarlemagne's goons."

Wolf grumbled. She didn't like distractions from their mission. They had to *save humanity*, not rescue people falling from the sky. "Fine, Kipo. We'll catch her. But, don't forget what our mission is."

Kipo nodded. She had to make sure that their team didn't fall apart. She had to be the leader. "I won't. I can promise you that."

Clearly dazed, while her light purple tunic and bushy pastel pink-purplish hair fluttered in the air, Glimmer's brown-pinkish eyes hopelessly peered at the planet's surface. *This will be my last act, my last triumph. Remember me, Bow. I'll always miss you*, she told herself. Out of nowhere, a big furry arm reached out and grabbed her. She closed her eyes and blacked out as Kipo guided the Mega Flamingo to the ground. What had formerly been Scarlemagne's court resembled another part of the wasteland. A dark brown-skinned man, with a circular beard and closely cropped brown hair, ran toward her. He embraced Kipo tenderly and she hugged him back. She had been reunited, with her father, Lio. "Uh, Dad. Someone was falling from the sky. We had to rescue her before coming here. I hope that's ok. Sorry we're late."

Lio acknowledged what she was saying. Having a person fall out of the sky did seem strange, though. "I understand, Kipo. No person's life should be wasted. In all my years underground, I've never seen someone with such tanned skin, thick sideburns, or clothes of that type. No one here wears clothes like that, especially not a leotard, tunic, boots, fingerless gloves, or a sparkling blue cape. It's odd."

Kipo couldn't agree more. She told him, "yeah, it is weird, *for sure*. What should we do about her?"

Weakly, Glimmer opened her eyes. Seeing only blurry shapes, she mumbled some words. Only a few were comprehensible. Her thoughts were a jumbled mess with no rhyme or reason. "Etheria…Bow…Entrapta…portal…space-time…runestone…friend."

No one had any idea what Glimmer was talking about. She soon became limp and non-responsive. Her appearance didn't buck the usual standards of their group. After all, Kipo had spiky pale-pink hair in a ponytail and wore casual clothes, while Benson, with dark brown skin and short and spiky black hair, wore a buttoned-up shirt. This contrasted with Wolf, a shorter girl, who had a similar skin complexion, curly black hair, cuffed grey jeans, and a black T-shirt. She also had skin of a mute wolf across her back, and carried a tall menacing staff.

Completing their group were two other companions: a teal blue-skinned pig with four eyes, two black ears, a snout, and six legs, named Mandu, and a constantly changing bug named Dave. None of them had ever seen someone with the same physical features or outfit as Glimmer. Nor had anyone seen a purple-colored staff, with an ornate blue jewel and light pinkish white-colored loop on top, before. Glimmer's right hand tightly clung to it.

A few hours passed. She awoke to the sight of Wolf's light brown eyes, Benson's brown eyes, and Kipo's magenta eyes ogling her. The glow of the nearby fire, crackling from burning

sticks and twigs, illuminated the crevice. Rubbing her eyes, to make sure she wasn't dreaming, she came to the realization that she had survived, somehow. "Where am I? And who are you all?"

Kipo looked intently into her eyes. She cleared her throat and began explaining. "You are in a barren, bleak land known as Las Vistas. I'm Kipo. What's your name?"

She decided to share her name. Maybe it would help as they could help her get back to Etheria. She's rather be there than *here* any day. "My name is Glimmer…ugh, my head is throbbing…it hurts so badly."

Kipo realized that even with everything that was going on, she *had* to help this young woman. What other choice did she have? How could she be a good person if she didn't help someone in need. "Nice to meet you. We'll get you some medical supplies tomorrow to treat your injured head. For now, we will rest…together."

Glimmer yawned. Becoming more and more sleepy by the moment, she told Kipo, "Thanks, *my kind friend*. I'll need some new clothes too because these don't suit me anymore after I left my home...Good night."

As Kipo and Glimmer drifted off to sleep. Wolf grumbled about not trusting an outsider such as Glimmer. Benson assured him it would be fine. Soon consumed by slumber, Dave, Mandu and Lio joined them. The latter snoozed near his daughter, Kipo, intending to stay by her side for protection and express his affection for her subconsciously.

The next day, the morning sun softly lit the faces of Kipo, Glimmer, Wolf, Benson, and Lio. Yawning, Kipo stretched and gently whispered that everyone needed to get up. Mandu and Dave did so, followed by Wolf. Lio and Benson remained in slumber. Glimmer groused about needing "five more minutes" to rest. Kipo awoke her dad, and Dave awakened Benson. Once everyone had roused, Kipo haughtily led the group out of the cave into the dilapidated town, city, or whatever type of sprawling human settlement it had been in the 'old days.'

It reminded Glimmer of the settlements destroyed by the Horde on Etheria, making her shed a tear. She became a bit homesick. Under her breath, she murmured "I wish I could go home."

Spinning in a 360-degree direction, Kipo asked her about it, making her jump. "Glimmer, what's 'home' for you?"

Sighing, Glimmer turned toward Kipo. She explained where her "home" was, even though she didn't feel that welcome there anymore. "I-it's a faraway planet named Etheria…you *probably* haven't heard of it."

Kipo was intrigued. She'd always loved looking at the stars, but meeting someone *from another planet*? That's awesome. "So, you are from another planet? That's so cool!" she said.

They continued to walk through the run-down, teal-covered streets. Trees and bushes popped in and out of decaying buildings. They came upon the place Kipo had gotten her outfit all

those days ago. Although it had only been two weeks since she had been inside, it seemed an eternity ago.

The orange-painted, and partially crumbling, building had a huge, sturdy tree growing on the roof, a crunched sign with the word "clothing" in all caps on front. The former store had no discernible door. Kipo boastfully showed Glimmer indoors. Lio, Benson, Wolf, and Dave did not enter. Mandu, following their typical behavior, wandered in, snorting. Plants grew throughout, showing that the store had been unoccupied for a long time.

Marching behind the moldy curtain, Glimmer threw her leotard, tunic, fingerless gloves, long white glove, and sparkling blue cape over the curtain rod. Kipo clutched the discarded clothes in her hands. Fancying the sparky quality of the fabric, she stashed Glimmer's cape into her small pants pocket. It barely fit. Glimmer tried on a cute explorer's outfit with a sombrero, a light green short-sleeved colored shirt, darker green shorts fastened with a brown belt, announcing "a ha!" She groaned. As she continued testing garments, she followed the same pattern.

Next, she put on long dark blue pants and an oversized dark pink sweater with a teal stripe down the middle, followed by a ballerina outfit with a white tutu, light purple pantyhose, a light-and-dark purple top with half-sleeves. Following that, a dark green shirt, medium blue undershirt, and a black hat. Afterwards, a black sleeveless shirt, blue pants, and a huge overcoat, then a huge overflowing, multi-colored dress. None of these outfits suited her right, so she closed the curtain and combined elements of each get-up.

She put on the black sleeveless shirt on top of a light-and-dark purple top piece, pulled on light purple pantyhose, putting darker green shorts over top. She kept her maroon boots which had white moons on the front and sole, with light blue wings on the sides, and varied blue points, while discarding her former apparels. She appreciated how it fit her beige-colored and brown-tinted skin. She kept her boots so that some memory of home would always be with her. She loudly pronounced that the clothes fit her perfectly. Kipo clapped happily while Glimmer awkwardly smiled in response, uttering in her ear, "*thank you* for saving me."

After leaving the store, they sauntered over to a vacant supermarket, finding a pack of adhesive bandages and other medical dressings, snatching them for their own survival. When Glimmer’s back had turned, Kipo sneakily stuffed Glimmer's shimmering cape into Benson's backpack. He noticed. She smirked at him, telling him to be quiet. He rolled his eyes.

Lio wrapped long medical strips around Glimmer's forehead in hopes that it would help her recover. Continuing to travel across the dirt roads, she asked herself what time and place she had ended up in. Back on Etheria, in contrast with Earth, no one followed a set year system, at least not while the war with the Horde raged. Curious, she asked Kipo about the planet, hoping to learn more about it. If she would be stuck here, she thought that knowing more would be important to her survival in the coming days. "So…what year is it here in Las Vistas?"

Kipo began speaking. She started to say "Last I heard…," then her dad interjected. This annoyed her a bit, but she was willing to tolerate it for now. "The year is 2220, over two hundred years after the Great Mutant Outbreak in 2007."

She shot back, "Dad! I was about to say that!"

Her dad tried to be apologetic. He didn't want to interrupt, it just happened, by accident. "Sorry, Kipo, the response just came off my tongue."

She forgave him for his interruption. She never wanted to be angry at her dad, especially not now. "It's okay, Dad. I realize that you are excited to meet someone new and I can sympathize with that. Welcome to Las Vistas, Glimmer!"

She hesitated a little. She did not know what to say. "I-It's a pleasure to be here."

With Scarlemagne deceased, the animal order had been disrupted. Groups vied for power. Kipo and her friends, new and old, were not alone. A legion of Mod Frogs, comprised of Mrs. Sartori, Jamack, Harris, and Kwat, approached them, stamping out of their limousine, a huge dragonfly on a chain, which had pulled the car forward, touching down. These creatures were some of the planet's mutes, a result of the Great Mutant Outbreak. Creature had metamorphosed beyond their initial intelligence and size, as humans fled to burrows under the planet's surface. As a result, these new mutes asserted their dominance, banding together with others, sometimes employing human vehicles such as cars and motorcycles. The food chain changed, with mutes on top and humans near the bottom. Many of fauna had enhanced capabilities, extra eyes, arms, or whatnot. Some didn't even speak a discernible language, and a few were gigantic.

The Mod Frogs comprised frogs the size of typical humans, basing their organization around the mob's culture. They wore tailored suits and dedicated themselves to organized crime. Luckily, the immaculate night vision of these villains wouldn't be a problem. Mrs. Sartori headed the heinous group, cackling at the sight of them. "Our leader is dead. We claim rightful ascendance to lead this land in his place! No longer will this be Las Vistas. It will be named…Froglandia!"

Kipo was astonished. *How* could have such a thing happened? Had *she* been responsible for it? "Wait, Scarlemagne died?" she asked.

Mrs. Sartori couldn't believe the question. How could Kipo, of all the beings, not know? "Yes, you *insignificant speck*! A dazzling, blinding light came from the sky, decimating him, causing his body to go in a thousand directions."

The long tongues of Mrs. Sartori, Jamack, Harris, and Kwat reached out for Kipo, Benson, Lio, and Wolf, believing that the newcomer (Glimmer), Mandu, and Dave couldn't possibly fight them. Trembling, Glimmer raised her staff and pointed it at the Mod Frogs. She wished for her magic capabilities to return so she could save her newfangled friends. A mirrored surface shone upon her staff. Combining with her reinvigorated might, her weapon shot out an intense blast, cutting off the tongues of the Mod Frogs, injuring them, as she struggled to control this power. In shock and fear, the mutes fled, swearing to never mess with them again. Kipo cheered. "Go, Glimmer! Go get 'em, girl!"

For Benson, it all came together. He had to share her thoughts. "Wait…that light we saw today reminds me of yesterday when something similar came from the sky above."

Kipo realized he had a point. The light she saw in front of them was so similar to what they had observed the previous day. "Oh yeah, I remember that. Uh, Glimmer, did you do the same thing yesterday?"

Glimmer realized she had to admit what she did. She couldn't lie to them. It wouldn't be right. "Accidentally. A lightning bolt struck this pole…I channeled my innate magic abilities downward…a strong white light shot out. Everything went dark. When I opened my eyes again, I saw some blurry shapes, mumbling something, and fell back asleep. Awakening the second time, I found myself lying in a cave sitting nearby a fire. I don't know *how* I got there."

Kipo tried to sympathize. She never had powers like that, but she could at least try to understand what happened. "That's okay, you blacked out, that's all…it does mean that you killed Scarlemagne. He is the top creature on the surface."

Glimmer grimaced. She remarked, "Oh. I didn't mean to! I hope he at least deserved it."

Kipo grumbled. From what she believed, Scarlemagne had deserved it. But, *what if* there had been more to him? She'd never know. What if he wasn't the real ruler? What if there was another person behind the scenes? She hoped for the best and feared for the worst. "I suppose so. It means we are in a heap of trouble. We can't let *anyone* in on this secret. Otherwise, *everyone* will be out to get us."

By 'everyone,' Kipo implied the six-armed Mega Monkey, the all-female Scooter Skunks without a fixed residence, Dubstep Bees, and self-proclaimed scholars calling themselves the Newton Wolves. Of these groups, Scarlemagne had controlled the Mega Monkey while the bees reported to him as spies, the Newton Wolves cooperated with him in exchange for their freedom to live in a way they chose, and the Humming Bombers dropped nectar grenades. With Scarlemagne dead, *who* would these groups serve?

There were other enormous mutes such as towering Mega Bunnies with five sets of ears and eight legs, having their own cute infant bunnies, double-beaked massive Mega Pigeons, and mutated canines with extra noses, eyes, legs and eyes which were called Mega Dogs. Unlike the other mutes, they had no loyalty to any individual or group.

Furthermore, the Mega Tortoises, reptiles which had four eyes and lush shells covered with trees, *probably* wouldn't mind Kipo and her group. The same could be suspected about the mute rats, Amy and Brad, who ran the only amusement park on the surface, the Umlaut Snäkes who Kipo had rocked out with in the desert, the ax-wielding lumberjack-like Timbercats, and the Fitness Raccoons. The beige bucktoothed, bug-eyed Glam Rock Hamsters, the mute butterfly named Charles, a mute elephant, dragonflies, and a deathstalker scorpion, along with many others, were wild cards who could side with *anyone*.

Chapter 3: Apta's New Life in Mystacor, the Runestone Draining Project, and Remembering the Past

Chapter Summary

> Entrapta continues to adapt to her new life in Mystacor, where she is now living with Perfuma, and where the planetary archives are located. As she continues her work on a plan to drain everyone's elemental powers through the runestones, in order to "level the playing field," Bow comes to Mystacor and watches an oral history where Adora talks about her time as She-Ra, which had been recorded a while ago. All the while, a feline woman knocks on Entrapta's door, with more shenanigans to come...

Chapter Notes

> Like the other chapters, I am splitting this off in preparation for posting this on Squidge World.

Light-years away, Apta extended her arms outward in a meditative pose. She had spent a long night trying to recalibrate the computer systems, adapting them to the recent changes. The former royal realms of Snows, Mystacor, Bright Moon, Salineas, and Plumeria were now connected with the Commune of Alwyn, the city-state of Elberon, and the Republic of Thaymor. The planet of Etheria, now completely free from war and conflict, couldn't sustain a world wide web because that would require a better power source. However, the planet did have what some called an 'extranet,' with content accessible from a newly-created information architecture, which was shared by those on the planet. It contrasted from a world wide web, used on Earth by humans, and an intranet.

The Etherian network crossed boundaries between state entities, while an intranet would be within a single organization or entity. Content on this network derived from an Interworking Protocol or IP, which she had co-written with Bow. Access to this network had been restricted to computer hubs in each state entity, while content traveled through cables, across the land to the central nervous system, consisting of a new location sitting atop the former Fright Zone. This network had more than static sites or a shared drive with stored documents. Rather, there were discussion boards and microblogs where citizens could comment on the issues in their community. Public comment on government decisions was encouraged. This system did not have virtual private networks owned by multiple entities. Instead, it had access-controlled traffic and firewalls, similar to some extranets.

For about four months, from March to mid-June 2019 the Archives of Etheria (AOE) sat on the same location after the Horde's defeat. Back then, Apta, in order to make up for her collaboration with the Horde, ensured that AOE had the suitable equipment. She continued this process when the AOE moved to Mystacor and she gained a newfound passion for bureaucratic methods. Now, the Central Etherian Data Center, headed by Apta, who had the title of Chief Technology Officer (CTO), named CEDC for short, had been constructed in its place. The AOE remained in Mystacor, at the request of George and Lance. She employed some of the old Horde machinery which had been left behind and discarded. Fuma had moved in with her, recognizing the importance of their friendship, as did Bow. She wouldn't be alone.

It had been over three months since Glimmer had been transported through time and space to a planet in another dimension. When her spacetime passageway intersected with the warp path of the *OCAC* it had been sent through a wormhole. Etheria had made tremendous progress since that point. Despite those changes, Bow still missed Glimmer. Even so, he thought if he forgot her, it would hurt him less. He had to move on, as much as it hurt to do so. The fall season approached on the planet, with Fuma wishing it would bring good spirits to all.

The wafts of delicious food reached Apta's nose. She shot out of her bed in a manner befitting a rocket. In the kitchen, within the facility's above-ground floor, situated on the same floor as the private rooms, where Apta, Bow, and Fuma slept, Fuma turned over pancakes with a wooden spatula she had carved herself. The pancakes were created from remnants of coconut-type fruits on trees deep in the Whispering Woods and plump deep purple berries on Plumerian trees, resembling blackcurrants. The fruits were picked by loyal Plumerians who were compensated through Liberation Dollars, a common currency that all the self-governing statelets of the planet had agreed upon. Apta, Fuma, and the other former Princesses continued to provide guidance in their non-governing roles.

Ambling into the room, Apta beamed. "Good morning, my fine friend! What are ya cooking today?"

Gleefully, she explained what she was cooking. "Some pancakes…it's one of those recipes from that cookbook *you stole* from Earth."

Apta thought back to it. Getting that book had been a challenge, but she had taken it from some school or something. She didn't think anyone would need it. "Right! I made one last mission with my probes before shutting down my operations in Mystacor, trying to focus all my attention on Etheria. Some disturbance in the fibers and curves of spacetime caused many of those probes to be damaged, except one, which contained that book. It came back only a few days ago. I'm planning to use those probes as scrap to improve the CEDC. I'm glad you are making use of the book."

She always appreciated *everything* that Apta did for her. So she thanked her for the effort that she had put into it. "Thanks for going to the trouble to get it! I really appreciate it as an early birthday present."

Apta was glad to see Fuma so happy. She liked seeing her happy. It made her glad. "No problem, Fuma. I'd do anything for you, even if we *never* leave this planet."

Fuma tried to reassure her that everything would be okay. She didn't have to worry about stuff like that. "Don't say that, dear. One day the portal of yours will work again…or maybe people will come from Earth. That 'Steven' still has that magical lion, right?"

She rolled her eyes. She realized that Fuma just wanted to make her happy. "Yeah, sure. Is breakfast ready?"

Fuma gladly answered her question. "It sure is! If you could call Bow, I'd appreciate it."

That was something she could definitely do. She could mess with Bow, yet again. "Can do, *flower girl*."

Hollering, Apta's voice echoed throughout the first floor. In no time at all, the sound reached Bow's room which affixed on it, reading "Respect the Tech Master. Please Knock Before Entering." Racing to his door enthusiastically, Apta banged on it, saying in a sweet voice, "come on, little bow-ey, it's time for breakfast. Rise and shine!"

He stirred and moved his arms outward, putting on his typical outfit: a sleeveless white tank top, light blue pants fastened with a brown belt and golden buckle, and knee-high boots. In the past, he wore a set of golden armor, a metal sleeve on his shoulder, and a forearm guard. Such armaments collected dust in a wooden closet, while his brown-and-gold quiver of arrows sat on a nearby table, as did a traditional and decorative composite bow. At the present, the Etherians lived happily, enjoying their peacetime, without *any* enemy to fight.

Bow reflected that himself, with the new look. He flung open the door, making Apta recoil. "You *don't* have to address me that way. You aren't my mo…dad, Apta!"

She snickered. She liked messing with him. "Yeah, but it's *cute*."

He sighed. He knew she was playing with his mind, but it annoyed him sometimes. "Fine, whatever. I heard breakfast is ready and I guess I should eat something."

Strolling into the kitchen, he massaged his eyes with his fingers. He knew that her nice hot meal would be great way to start the day. He lamented that her intense work, often without a break. Even though wartime had come and gone, sometimes she appeared to run herself ragged in order to keep the CEDC running, somewhat fulfilling the homemaker role. "Fuma, thanks for making breakfast. This food is great!…what is it they called?"

She began blabbing about the food excitedly. If she had been in another universe, another time, perhaps she could have had a cooking show. "Pancakes! They come from fruit grown in the Whispering Woods, topped by berries grown in Plumeria, picked by the citizens there. I'm so proud they are self-sufficient now, with extra supplies to trade with us. It's so delightful!"

Bow was impressed. He worried about how much work she did, however. And he made that known. "That's cool! You work *so hard* here. Please let me make breakfast sometime."

Fuma felt under pressure. She didn't want to lose her place in the household. So she stridently defended what she was doing. "I-I enjoy cooking *so much*, though!"

Bow didn't want to make her distraught or sad. He didn't want conflict. "I understand that, Fuma…Still, I'd appreciate having a chance, even if its only once and while."

Scratching her head, she pondered his proposal. While she had helped Apta with the Runestone Draining Project and other wild programs, in the long past, manual labor seemed more of her cup of tea. Breathing deeply, she nodded, and jovially yelped. "B-Bow, that sounds fantastic! I can gather some fruits from the forest, with the permission of the Plumerians and others…like those awful-smelling but juicy giant fruits, small blue-to-black, lime-green skinned, greenish-red, yellow-spotted pear-shaped, and the greenish-yellow skinned fruits…or I can grow some in my wonderful greenhouse. In fact, I have some mini-yellow and plump red fruits, large purple hybrid berries, grapes, and so much more. Gardening is my *second-favorite thing* after cooking!"

Bow felt relieved. He was glad that she had reacted this way and not in another, more negative fashion. "I am excited for you, Fuma. I think I'll make something with all the cornmeal we have. My dads used to make this thing called grits with tomato sauce. That probably isn't right for the first meal of the day, but I'll change it, adding some fruits on top of the grits."

Fuma was so excited. Cooking and making food was one of her favorite things to do. And to have someone else who wanted to help? Why not? It would make her life that much better, fuller, and richer. "I can't wait! You are *so smart*, Bow!" Hearing this warmed his heart. He appreciated what she said. "Thanks for the encouragement."

He pivoted to Apta, who gazed at him confusedly. Despite Fuma attempting to improve her social skills, she continued to remain a bit awkward. Motioning in her direction, taking the social cues from Fuma, Apta realized that he wanted to talk to her. "Bow, is there something you wanna ask me about?"

He was a bit nervous. He would rather stay there, but he also didn't like the fact he had to, he believed, ask for permission to do stuff. "There is. Can I go to Mystacor to *visit my dads*?"

Fuma chuckled. Did Bow think she was his mom or something? He was his own person. She definitely was *not* his mother. "Definitely! You don't need my permission, as you are your own person. Have fun. Keep in contact with us, okay?"

He smiled. He was glad that she had said that, as it made him feel better about himself. "You can count on me!"

Grabbing his quiver and bow for protection, Bow skipped outside happily, promising to tell them about AOE's functioning, something that interested Apta deeply. Humming to himself, he observed the beautiful sights surrounding him, as he walked through the Whispering Woods. He had grown up in the woods, so the surroundings didn't surprise him. On his way through this magical landscape, he stumbled upon one of the newly created computer centers. The name "Whispering Woods Junction" had been emblazoned on the front. For years, the library run by his dads, George and Lance, occupied the space. Times were *different* now. It delighted him that it continued to be used, especially in a way he never envisioned.

After a grueling hike through the woods, he reached the cliff where individuals stood before they crossed into Mystacor. The floating grassy rock, protective barrier, and the invisibility. It all seemed familiar. He visited the site once with Glimmer and Adora, another time with Glimmer, Adora, and the Crystal Gems, and finally lived there for several months as the unnecessary civil war raged across the planet. Treading carefully, the sights awed him once more. He knocked on a huge wooden door and announced himself. The door opened and George shook his hand, glad to see him again. He closed the door behind him and led Bow down a hallway.

"Bow, thanks so much for coming to visit! What brings you here?"

Bow started to explain why he had come there. He didn't think he had to explain, but having good communication is important, regardless. "I thought I'd check up on you all. Apta wanted to a progress report on the archives, since she helped build the system you all use…she's more into that *technical stuff* than me."

George knew what message to send Apta. The last thing he'd want is for her to be disappointed in him, and the archives. "Tell her that we've made digital copies of *all the documents* in our possession, along with photographs of three-dimensional objects, complete with a searchable database. All the originals remain stored and are constantly cared for, following her instructions."

Bow promised to send the message along. It was the least he could do. "I'll be sure to relay that to her. Dad, what about you? How are you doing?"

George excitedly answered him, remarking, "Great! This intellectual milieu excites me. I learn *something new* every day."

George called out, his voice reverberating through the building. "Hey, Lance! Bow came in for a visit…wanna come join us?"

An awkward pause ensued. Lance chirped back. "Definitely! Meet me in the audiovisual room. I'm watching that oral history interview I did a while back."

Strolling in, the video astonished Bow. He hadn't seen her for so long. Even on a screen, his memories flooded back as her essence shined through. His cheeks flushed with warmth and turned a dark red, holding his left hand to his face. He sheepishly laughed, trying to hide his emotions. He *never* imagined that a video of Adora would trigger such a reaction. Lance continued to study the film intently while George noticed his son's response. "You *had a thing* for her? You *never* told us anything about that."

He felt very embarrassed. He didn't want to talk about this. "U-uh…I-I-I…enjoyed her as a friend, that's all. *Nothing* happened between us!"

Lance chuckled. He thought of how shy he had been around his parents when they found out he was bi. So he knew a bit about what Bow was doing through. "It's fine, son, we are always here to listen. We are archivists now. However, I will always be your dad, as will George, until *the end of time*."

Bow hugged him back. He was always grateful to have two such great dads. "Thanks, Dad. Let's watch the tape."

Bow picked up a headset, sitting down next to Lance. All that time ago, his dad saw the interview with Adora as the perfect way to learn about She-Ra's powers and the First Ones, convincing her to talk with him in a library side room. Her participation would help future Etherians learn about She-Ra. He promised her that the interview's contents would stay in confidence. Now, he thought about making it public, although he needed Adora's permission first. Bow recalled how he had entered the library with Glimmer and that samurai fellow, his uneasiness when Adora shouted "By the Power of Greyskull!," echoing through the walls, and the camaraderie between her and his dad when they re-entered the library, drinking tea. Closing his eyes, Bow concentrated on the sound, trying to avoid the visual content distracting him. As hairs stood on the back of his neck, he breathed deeply and listened attentively.

"I'd like to ask you some questions today. This is Lance, citizen of Etheria, recording at the family library in the Whispering Woods on this beautiful day, with Adora Eros. Could you please state your name and age for the record?

"I'm Adora Eros, fighter for the Rebellion, age 17, I suppose.

"Let's start with that. You saw that video from the Crimson Waste temple earlier, where it showed your mom and dad. Do you remember anything about them?

"No. I recall being held by someone, seeing the stars, and being taken in by the Horde. Most of my early childhood memories are in the Fright Zone, playing with Catra, and the others.

"Tell me more about that, if you would.

"The Fright Zone wasn't the best place to grow up. There were so many rules and we were being trained to join their marauding army. Not until I met Glimmer and Bow, did I experience real joy and fun. My life changed when I joined them in the valiant battle against the Horde. Both are such great friends and I'm so glad to have them.

"Now, the last time you came to the library, you transformed into a magical princess. Could you show us how it works?

"I'd be happy to! I do it all the time now, so its no biggie. For the Honor of Greyskull!

With a flash, holding up her sword, her appearance changed. She became more muscular and her hair changed to a lighter blonde shade, as did her height, now towering over eight feet tall. Lance marveled at her new appearance. He continued his questioning.

"In this new form, what powers do you have?

"Apart from the ability to transform the sword into a cup, flute, shield, bracelet, or whatnot, I have super strength, incredible agility, healing abilities, animal transformation, and energy blasts. Even when I'm not transformed, I am skilled in hand-

to-hand combat, survival, navigation, and developing strategy, due to my years training as a Horde soldier.

"That's a lot. How long does do you stay in this transformed form?

"It depends, but I can control it a lot better than when I first discovered my abilities. It's a lot of responsibility but I'll do anything to keep my friends safe.

"Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

"Sometimes, I feel alone on this planet. Bow and Glimmer are my friends, and we form the Best Friend Squad together. That's nice. But I wish I could meet someone new, maybe someone from somewhere else, that I could share my skills with. For now, I'll work with what I have.

"When you say 'someone new"you mean a person from another world?

"Well, duh. If I was born on Eternia…why wouldn't there be hundreds, if not thousands of others out there, populated with life? It's the only logical explanation.

"I can't agree more. Now…

While Bow and Lance were absorbed intently by the film, George sprinted to the door. He opened it, welcoming the next patron inside the archives. He saw a familiar face: Angella, the purple-skinned, pink-and-purple haired Chief Archivist on paper. She often moped and walled herself off from others after her daughter, Glimmer, jumped into a portal all those months ago. The video continued playing. It ended with pleasantries.

"Thank you, Adora, for participating in this interview.

"My pleasure. I can come back anytime to continue our conversation.

"That sounds great! How about some tea?

"Sure! Let's bust out of this joint and go back the main library room.

"There's nothing I'd love more, especially if we are tea-drinking while doing it!

The tape concluded with laughs from Lance and Adora. Lance turned off the screen, which receded into the ceiling. With a soft knock on the door frame by a tattered white glove, Bow spun his chair 180 degrees. Angella entered the room to Bow and Lance's amazement. In the past, she had taken care of herself. Her dual-toned hair looked matted, her blue cape ratty, her pink leotard and light purple leggings frayed, her purple boots worn ragged. Only her wings shimmered, as did the gem adorning her forehead and her pearl-drop-shaped earrings.

She began sobbing. "I miss my daughter *so much*! If I had been able to talk to her, *maybe* she wouldn't have marched into that portal! Oh, the inhumanity!"

Bow explained to what he did to help her daughter. After all, he still had some feelings for her. "I tried to do that. She remained pigheaded. She didn't listen to me. Even if you had

attempted to convince her, it would all be for naught."

Angella realized that he was right. She couldn't sit around moping all day. "You are right, Bow. I examine the stars every day, hoping Glimmer will come back. All I wish is for *her safety*, wherever she is."

Bow tried to reassure her that nothing would happen to Glimmer. She would be fine, he hoped. He tried to be optimistic. "She'll be ok. As long as we *don't* forget her, she will live on for us."

On the other side of the planet, the CEDC's front door rattled. Fuma unbolted the lock, grinning to her delight. The tan-skinned, slender feline woman wore a moldy, greyish cloak, complete with a hood of the same color. Her heterochromatic eyes, turquoise on the right, pale yellow on the left, were sparkling. She introduced herself as "Wildcat, uh, the intern."

Stepping inside, Fuma, led her to the lower floor where the data centers were housed. Apta informed her the previous day that this new person would be working in their facility. Catching a glimpse of the woman from the side of her eye, Apta told Fuma to "leave us," complying with the request.

As Fuma went about her other duties like gardening and creating plants, using her still-existing magic abilities, the woman threw off her disguise, now that Fuma had left. She revealed herself to be Catra, formerly the Horde's second-in-command, once sentenced to imprisonment in the Northern Reach alongside Scorpia, Rogelio, Kyle, Lonnie, Grizzlor, Octavia, and other minor Horde soldiers.

Chuckling maniacally, Apta declared, "let's get to work," followed by a smile from Catra akin to the grin of a malevolent Cheshire Cat.

Chapter 4: The Off Colors, Fighting Peridots, and Continuing a Journey

Chapter Summary

The battle between the Off Colors and Peridots continues, with their laser cannons firing at each other. While some of the Off Colors are terrified, others are more optimistic. No matter the result of this battle, there's no doubt that their journeys will continue onward.

Chapter Notes

This chapter, which I split off from the rest of the fic in preparation for posting this on Squidge World, picks up where Chapter 1 left off. I know this chapter is short, but it made sense to split it from the last chapter, which wasn't fully related enough.

Back in space, millions if not billions of light years away, the battle between the *OCAC* had turned into a standoff. The *OCAC*'s cannons were charging as were those of the enemy ships. Rhodonite shrieked in utter horror. A new energy signature was off the charts, stronger than anything she had ever witnessed.

"CCC-aptain! The Peridots are charging up a huge machine and pointing it straight at us! We need to do something, otherwise *we will be crumbled* into specks of dust!"

Lars tried to calm the crew once more. He said, "Don't worry Rhodo…nite. Everything contains energy, whether it is massive or massless. We are traveling across the plains of spacetime…space and time are unified…There can be large energy fluctuation at small scales. *I doubt* we will be drawn into another space and time distortion or any sort of quantum entanglement. In any case, their mechanism needs to be destabilized by any means necessary…its existence threatens the fabric of the universe."

Understanding his command, Rhodonite responded by saying, "It will be done, Captain!"

The *OCAC's* weapons were discharged, with green lasers streaking across the sky, hitting the edges of the apparatus with a boom. A huge wormhole appeared, smashing the machine into bits. The Peridots were scattered, as a result, and thrown across space wildly.

Unfortunately for Lars and the Off Colors, the spacetime gateway pulled them in, with momentum growing every second. Having studied science in school, he predicted that time would move slower from them due to their acceleration and the pull of gravity, recognizing

the continuous and discrete nature of spacetime, the latter warping around gravitational bodies. He couldn't comprehend the changes in this four-dimensional space, complete with curves and flat areas, certain particles and fields connected even if on opposite sides of the universe, a phenomenon known as quantum nonlocality. If he been nerdy enough, he could have measured the distances they traveled using 'light signals.' Some theorized that the fabric of reality consisted only of a grid of pixels. Others once thought that you couldn't go faster than the speed of light. None of this mattered now. He wished they weren't entering a black hole which would kill them, rearranging their atoms in new forms, with energy and matter crushed. They could not escape. He doubted they were entering a white hole, a region which allows light, energy, or matter to leave but cannot be entered from the outside.

Without warning, an unknown force charged up their weapons, readying them to fire. Rhodonite did all she could to reverse it. Nothing worked. Lars wondered if a gravitational wave instigated from a disruption in the curvature of spacetime, the wormhole itself, or a network extending across the universe. The distress of his crew concerned him. He roared one command they all could follow without question.

"Hang on tight, Pappy, Rhodo, RT, and Fluorite! We are *in for a wild ride*!"

Saluting, Rhodonite declared, "Aye, Captain, thar she blows!"

The song that Melty sings is based off "Found," which is sung by Steven and Spinel in "Steven Universe: The Movie." Some of this is likely inspired by my memory of Steven Universe episodes (especially the one where Lapis and Jasper have a confrontation in the water with Steven present), but also I am taking from one of those Star Wars: The Clone Wars episodes, although I can't remember the exact one that the device, like the one in this story, was used.

For sources on peridot stones, I used "Peridot Meaning, Powers and History" on Jewels For Me, Gem Encyclopedia entry on peridot gem, and Your On-Line Guide to The Healing Energies, Metaphysical Properties, Legendary Uses and Meaning of Peridot by Crystal Vaults. Furthermore, pages such as Mega Flamingo, Scarlemagne, Scarlemagne's Nobles, Lio Oak, Kipo Oak, Benson, Wolf, Mandu, Dave, Mute, Mod Frogs, Mega Dogs, Mega Monkey, Mega Bunnies, Mega Pigeon, Umlaut Snäkes, Scooter Skunks, Dubstep Bees, Timbercats, Glam Rock Hamsters, Newton Wolves, Fitness Racoons, Humming Bombers, Amy, Brad, The Great Mutant Outbreak, on the Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts fandom, Glimmer, Bow, Adora, Queen Angella, and George and Lance pages on the She-Ra fandom, the Warp Pad page on the Steven Universe fandom, along with clues and description from the first episode of Kipo, were helpful in providing necessary context information.

Additionally, the "Skin Tone Chart" page again provided information for character skin tones. The scene of Fuma cooking pancakes is loosely based on a similar scene in the third episode of Ascendance of a Bookworm, titled "The Events of Winter." Michael Joseph's "52 Types of Fruit: Nutritional Profiles and Health Benefits" also helped flesh out this story. The answers to the question "Can black people blush?" on Quora helped with this story as well.

For information on spacetime, I loosely employed Ethan Siegel's "Are Space And Time Quantized? Maybe Not, Says Science" in Forbes (6/14/18), the description of the "Quantum Reality: Space, Time, and Entanglement" event on the World Science Festival website, "Is time travel possible?" on the NASA website responding to a question by the Members of the Tripoli Minnesota Rocket Club #45, Kelly Dickerson's "Here's why astronauts age slower than the rest of us here on Earth" in Business Insider (8/19/15), "Space and Time: Inertial Frames" entry in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (11/4/09), Sean Carroll's "What is space-time? The true origins of the fabric of reality" in New Scientist (9/11/19), George Musser's "Why Space and Time Might Be an Illusion" in HuffPost (12/6/17), "Satellite confirms we live in a space-time warp" (5/4/11) in NBC News, Etahn Siegel's "Are Space, Time, And Gravity All Just Illusions" in Forbes (10/4/17), "The Hole Argument" entry in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (5/17/19), "Space-time vortex" on NASA's website (11/16/05), Anil Ananthaswamy's "How to think about...Space-time" in New Scientist (12/10/14), James Overduin in "Spacetime and Spin," a page on the website Gravity Probe B: Testing Einstein's Universe (Jan 2008), Paul Sutter's "What If Space-Time Were 'Chunky'? It Would Change the Nature of Reality" in LiveScience (11/20/19), Kristin Houser's "Scientists Are Rethinking the Very Nature of Space and Time" on Futurism (1/6/18), Laurel Harris's post "space/time" on the Chicago School of Media Theory's website, part of the University of Chicago, John Fuller's "Einstein, Relativity and the Space-time Continuum", "The Warp

Drive", "Problems with Warp Speed" on HowStuffWorks, John D. Norton's "Spacetime" page for his class 'Einstein for Everyone,' Nola Taylor Redd's "Time Warps and Black Holes: The Past, Present & Future of Space-Time" on space.com (12/31/15), Calla Cofield's "Time Travel and Wormholes: Physicist Kip Thorne's Wildest Theories" on space.com (12/19/14), Tamara Davis, Dean Rickles, and Susan Scott's "Understanding gravity--warps and ripples in space and time" on the Australian Academy of Science website, Charles W. Choi's "Space-time is swirling around a dead star, proving Einstein right again" on space.com (1/31/20), "Space and Time Warps" on hawking.org.uk taking from a lecture by Stephen Hawking, "What is Spacetime, Really" by Stephen Wolfram (12/2/15), the "Space-Time" page on The Physics of the Universe website, quotes from Paul Davies' book titled Cosmic Jackpot, Brian Greene's book titled The Elegant Universe, and Janna Levin.

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